



July 26, 2024

Hello, Willow Creek Community!

Welcome to the 2024-2025 school year. I hope this message finds you well. It is with great excitement and honor that we continue to serve our students and the Willow Creek community. From the moment I stepped into this vibrant community, I felt the warmth and dedication that makes our school community special. Your support helps us to provide the best possible learning environment for our students.

Each year we have a theme word that helps us unify around our school vision and mission. My first year, our word was *Believe*. We truly believe each and every child is here for a reason. The following year, we started Family Connection meetings and our word was *Connect*. We believe that connections help our big world feel like a smaller Willow Creek community. Last year, our word was *Intentional* as we implemented new curriculums and continued to be intentional about using data to drive instruction and plan for our students. This year, our theme word is *Elevate*. We will continue to elevate our teaching and our learning to be better for our students. We elevate students' voices as we want to hear them and promote leadership and independence in each student.

Please know that safety and security are something we take very seriously. Our entire staff is well-versed on the Cherry Creek School District's safety protocols and procedures. We discuss, prepare, and practice these procedures throughout the school year. A couple years ago, we installed a secure vestibule with a second set of doors. We need your help as we believe we can continue to provide a warm, welcoming neighborhood school and be vigilant to provide a safe learning

environment for our students and staff. Thank you for being kind and considerate to staff as they ask you to refrain from entering a side door and to check in and provide an ID at the front door. Although inconvenient, please remember that safety supersedes convenience and that safety is our priority. We also expect you as a community member to come alongside with us as we practice safety. This includes a shared responsibility in our parking lot adhering to a few safety guidelines.

- Drive slowly and attentively, being mindful of children and pedestrians.
- Do not park in handicapped spots unless you have a handicapped sticker.
- Do not park in designated bus spots.
- Be patient and courteous with other drivers, being a role model to all students.
- Pull all the way up to unload children in the school lane for safety and efficiency.

Families are asked to complete their Parent Forms online prior to the first day of school. Parents who have not completed the on-line Parent Forms will be receiving either an email or text message three times a week until Labor Day with a reminder to get these important parent forms completed. This notification will have all the information in it regarding accessing these forms for completion. Please note: **NO CHILD WILL BE ABLE TO ATTEND SCHOOL UNTIL THE PARENT FORMS ARE COMPLETED CORRECTLY.** Your child will have a green checkmark next to his/her name once their forms are updated and the front office at Willow Creek will be able to see this completion indicator. Please make sure to complete these forms **NO LATER THAN WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 7th**. Thank you for your attention to this.

During the week of August 5th, you will receive an email from your child's new teacher introducing themselves and asking you to sign up for **Family Connection Meetings**. Most Family Connection meetings will take place later in the work week of August 5-9 or in the beginning of the first week of school when that grade level does not have students. We know some of you will be on last-minute vacations, and for you, we will accommodate by meeting before or after school during the first

few weeks of school. The meeting is **not** a conference in the traditional sense, as we are not sharing data. The meeting is truly a time to connect and learn about your child from you, your child's expert! This meeting is in lieu of a traditional Back to School Night and will give you and your child more time with your child's teacher.

Some of the questions you may want to think about are:

- What do you want us to know about your child?
- What are your child's assets/strengths, both in and out of school?
- What is important for us to know about your family?
- Tell us your hopes for your child for this year and beyond.
- Is there anything else you would like to share?

**Staggered Start to the School Year:**

- August 12, 2024 Grades 3, 4, and 5 **Only**
- August 13, 2024 Grades 1, 2 **Only**
- August 14, 2024 All students (Pre-Kindergarten - Grade 5)

**Back-to-School Family Picnic: August 8, 5:00-6:30 pm.** Please join us for a back-to-school family picnic! BYOD (Bring Your Own Dinner) and come play on the playground near our K, 1, 2 doors. We look forward to seeing you for this social event to kick off the start of school. We will have otter pops to cool off your children and celebrate the start of the school year.

**New Families Grades 1-5:** If you are NEW to Willow Creek, please join us for the Back-to-School Family Picnic as mentioned above. At 5:30 on August 8 (during family picnic), there will be a brief tour of our school for NEW families only (does not include Kindergarteners that already had orientation). Meet other parents and kids, visit the PTO tent, and find out more about upcoming events and activities. This is not a time to connect with your teacher (that's Family Connection Meetings); it is a time to connect with each other, me, and see our school. **At 5:30, if you are a new family, please meet us at the front of the school.**

**Community Movie Night:** PTO will host a Community Movie night on September 6 at 7:00 pm. The hill will open at 6:30, weather permitting. More information to

come. We are excited to provide another opportunity for our community to connect.

**Kelly Hynes: Assistant Principal:** We are thrilled to welcome Kelly Hynes back for a second year at Willow Creek. She has been an amazing addition to our phenomenal staff!

**New Staff to Willow Creek:** We are very excited to welcome our new staff! And they are beyond excited to be joining our team!

- Andrea Gee is joining us as a part-time reading interventionist. Andrea has been our building-based substitute the last two years and was a classroom teacher prior to that. She will be an asset to our team.
- Summer Kavanaugh is joining us as our GT teacher. She has been part of the CCSD family for over 15 years. She has taught middle school science and 2nd-4th graders as well as teaching at a school serving gifted students.
- Rachel O'Dea: 4th Grade. Rachel has taught in varying positions in CCSD for nearly 20 years and comes with a wealth of experience. (Taylor Symons is moving on to a teacher coaching position in the district. We appreciate all her years of service and she will be missed).
- Erin Funera: Instructional Coach. Erin has an Elementary Education and Special Education background and is joining us from another CCSD school.
- Jessica Gallegos: LD Para. Jessica is joining us from Littleton Public schools and is beyond excited to be here at Willow Creek. She has many years of experience as a teacher and a para.
- Alexie Hostetler: LD Para. Alexie is currently a Before & After Program Assistant Director at a CCSD school and is working on her elementary teaching license.
- Barb Nesbett: Barb is joining us from West Middle School where she just retired as a special education teacher. Her own child was a former Willow Creek student and we are happy to have her join us as a para.

**Open Positions:** If you know someone that would be interested in working as a para with our awesome ILC students, please reach out to me at [mwhitney2@cherrycreekschools.org](mailto:mwhitney2@cherrycreekschools.org)

**Arrival and Dismissal:**

- Please plan on having your child come in their grade-level door between our Soft Start Times: 7:45-8:00 am. If arriving after 8:00, your child will be marked tardy and need to enter through the front doors. Timeliness does matter in creating good habits in our students.
- School dismissal is at 2:45 pm except on Wednesdays. Please make every effort to be on time to pick up your child.
- CCSD provides a weekly Early Release Day for Elementary Schools. This allows our teachers to meet weekly in their Professional Learning Communities to continue to promote student achievement. **Every Wednesday students will dismiss at 1:45.** Buses will run accordingly. Also, our Before and After Club (WCCK) will open at 1:45 every Wednesday afternoon. Please contact our director, Allison Evans ([aevans10@cherrycreekschools.org](mailto:aevans10@cherrycreekschools.org)), if you need more information.

Warmly,  
Principal Mary Whitney

